

HECB FORM 1

**COVER SHEET
NEW DEGREE PROGRAM PLANNING NOTIFICATION OF INTENT
(PLANNING NOI)**

Program Information

Program Name: Interdisciplinary Early Childhood and Family Studies

Institution Name: University of Washington, Seattle

Degree Granting Unit: College of Education
(e.g. College of Arts and Science)

Degree: BA Early Childhood and Family Studies Level: Bachelor Type: Arts
(e.g. B.S. Chemistry) (e.g. Bachelor) (e.g. Science)

Major: Early Childhood and Family Studies CIP Code: 19.0701
(e.g. Chemistry)

Minor: N/A
(if required for major)

Concentration(s):
(if applicable)

Proposed Start Date: Autumn, 2007

Projected Enrollment (FTE) in Year One: 35 (all juniors) At Full Enrollment by Year: 2010 50 Juniors; 50 Seniors
(# FTE) (# FTE)

Proposed New Funding Source: TBD

Funding Source: State FTE Self Support Other

Mode of Delivery

Single Campus Delivery Seattle
(enter locations)

Off-site field placements at Seattle Head Start programs (UW Jumpstart); White Center
(enter locations)

Distance Learning _____
(enter formats)

Substantive Statement of Need

Attach Sheet

Contact Information (Academic Department Representative)

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Endorsement by Chief Academic Officer Date

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Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood and Family Studies
University of Washington, Seattle

Substantive Statement of Need

This is an exciting time to be studying young children and their families. Awareness about the importance of learning that takes place during the first five years of life has grown dramatically. The alarming suggestion from the Washington Learns that half of all children entering kindergarten in Washington state are not properly prepared for school is one pertinent example.¹ More broadly, recent research emphasizes the importance of early development for later success in school and adjustment in life. The lifelong challenges faced by children and families at risk have often been documented, while the effect of high quality early learning opportunities and programs to ameliorate these challenges has also been established. At the University of Washington and elsewhere, the growth in information has been built upon neuroscience and behavioral science. Initiatives across our state and university demonstrate the interest among community members and scholars in increasing new opportunities for expanding and applying information in the area of child development and family life.

Taking into account new research and community service initiatives, our proposal to offer a BA in Early Childhood and Family Studies through the College of Education, grew out of the strong interest of an interdisciplinary group of scholars at the UW. The proposed major will encourage students to examine the field of early childhood and families studies from a variety of perspectives and to expand their learning through rich field experiences and a culminating senior project. We are proud to propose this major, which will enable students to pursue educational and research careers in early learning.

Given the great public and academic interest, it is striking that the University of Washington does not offer an undergraduate major in early childhood and family studies. Such a major would have many advantages, some of which overlap with goals that have been explicitly identified by the University. Such a major would complement the extremely strong research and graduate programs at the UW in the areas of child development, family studies, children at risk, and social policy. For years, the UW has been a showcase for research and graduate education in the disciplines of education, nursing, psychology, speech and hearing sciences, physical therapy, occupational therapy, to name just a few fields. The proposed undergraduate major will be built upon this rich base and create a new opportunity for students at the UW-Seattle. An early childhood undergraduate major would also utilize extensive existing undergraduate course offerings already available at the university and facilitate the creation of new interdisciplinary offerings by offering a place for faculty from a variety of programs and departments to collaborate.

The proposed major would help create partnerships with the community as well. Such partnerships would come in many forms, including links with community early childhood

¹ D. Pavelchek, Student Readiness for kindergarten: A survey of Kindergarten Teachers in Washington State, Washington State University Social and Economic Research Center, 2005. Quoted in Washington Learns, "Creating a World-class, Learner-focused Education System for Washington," 13. HECB P.O. Box 43430 Olympia, WA 98504-3430 www.hecb.wa.gov/autheval

centers, institutes, community colleges, and the exciting new public-private partnership in Washington state called Thrive by Five. An undergraduate major in early childhood would also create a logical articulation for many students in community colleges who wish to transfer to the UW and study pre-k and early education. The proposed major would also add to the University's efforts to graduate students in four years, since it would allow students to combine fields they might otherwise pursue double majors in.

This interdisciplinary major in early child development would prepare students for positions in social services/mental health, education, child care, and research. Job opportunities are expanding in the area of early childhood. National efforts (e.g., Head Start, National Association for the Education of Young Children) are underway to require that early childhood teachers have a bachelor's degree. A new undergraduate major would also serve as a pathway for students interested in graduate studies in speech and hearing sciences, education, physical therapy, occupational therapy, nursing, psychology, nutrition, and social work. Since the University of Washington has excellent graduate programs in these areas of study, the gap at the undergraduate level seems particularly striking.

A survey of UW students was conducted in 2004 to ascertain the level of interest in an undergraduate major in early childhood and family studies. The survey was sent to undeclared undergraduates. Approximately two-thirds of respondents were interested or very interested in the major. Respondents appeared interested in all aspects of the proposed curriculum including the theoretical foundations of the field, methods for working with children and families, and policy issues.

An analysis of opportunities for undergraduate education in the area of early childhood was conducted by the Washington State Child Care Resources and Referral Network and the Puget Sound ESD Head Start in 2006 (Yang Affolter, 2006). The report starts from the premise that most early childhood teachers in Head Start do not have bachelor's degrees. The same is true for child care providers. The report states that there are few options for students seeking four-year degrees specifically in early childhood education or related fields from public institutions. In the Greater Puget Sound region there are opportunities to obtain bachelors degrees in co-located programs at community colleges (e.g., Eastern Washington at Bellevue Community College) or via distance learning (e.g., Washington State University). None of the available undergraduate programs are designed to immerse students at the intersection of research, policy and practice as is envisioned by the program at the University of Washington. In sum, the proposed Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood and Family Studies will complement and strengthen an area of study demanded by students and needed for the local and regional community.